

School bonus plan aims to reward workers

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Randolph County Schools, just like other school systems, had some staff shortages due to COVID-19. The system felt they needed to focus on retaining current employees, recruitment, sign-in bonuses for future employees and assisting the substitute staff.

As a result, at their Oct. 18 meeting, the school system announced they would give out \$5,000 bonuses for all full-time employees. New employees will get \$2,500 and if they continue to the end of the year, they will get the rest. Part-time employees will get a percentage of the \$5,000 based on how many hours per week they work.

Superintendent Stephen Gainey said he heard positive comments and feedback from school staff who felt appreciated. He said he believes it's important to encourage and recognize the work teachers and staff do.

"There's a fraternity in education and it's bigger than just teachers. It's a fraternity of people who work in schools, and the great schools are the ones the staff knows that everybody and every job is needed to have a great day at school," Gainey said.

Tabernacle Elementary School educator Julie Perdue said she was grateful for the bonus and the recognition of the hard work put in by school staff during the pandemic. She said teachers were texting each other about the board

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Bonus

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meeting and the approval of the funds.

According to Gainey, the bonus plan was essential since the school was able to stay open all this time. Since there were hardworking substitute custodians, bus drivers, child nutrition staff members and school daycare, he felt more should be given to the people who help the school.

Gainey said the school system is the largest employer in the county. In the spring, there were 2,502 employees and he felt the bonus plan was the right direction to go in.

The school system has also worked closely with universities and has many student teachers who complete internship experience and teaching.

"We have a great partnership with

High Point University, University of North Carolina Greensboro and North Carolina A&T State University, where teachers are working on getting their Master of Arts in Teaching certificate," Gainey said.

The superintendent said they had the partnership for seven to eight years and hired many teachers from their program. The system also participates in job fairs throughout the spring and sometimes fall.

"Every year, I go speak to the student teachers before they go out at High Point University or UNCG. I never pass up an opportunity to go to a university to speak with teachers and candidates in their program," Gainey said.

The school system also makes early contracts for teachers, with many teachers coming out of college. For the 2021-2022 school year, they made 19 early contracts and have been for the past seven years. Gainey said there had been few

vacancies in the teaching positions, with six early childhood positions and six regular classrooms.

However, he said the big problem this year was with custodians, child nutrition and bus drivers. Gainey said the best part about the bonus plan is that everybody will get the same amount. When they thought of retention, they realized everyone should get \$5,000, including principals, teachers, custodians, child nutrition and clerical staff.

In his 29 years, Gainey has never been involved with an opportunity like this and feels it was warranted. He was excited that the board approved the funds and was 100% supportive of the staff.

Other school districts in the area, such as Asheboro City Schools, have discussed the possibility of incentives for staff. At the Oct. 14 Asheboro City Board of Education meeting, Finance Officer Sandra Spivey let the board know a recommendation would be presented for

their consideration at the Nov. 4 meeting.

In a shared message to staff, Superintendent Aaron Woody said the system recognizes the hard work and sacrifices made each day for students. "We are working diligently with our board and North Carolina Department of Public Instruction to make our plans a reality for you."

The Courier-Tribune will give updates on the board's decisions at the November meeting.

Randolph County School System employees should expect to see the money in their next paycheck.

Petrucce Jean-Charles is a Government Watchdog Reporter. They are interested in what's going on in the community and are open to tips on people, businesses and issues. Contact Petrucce at pjeancharles@gannett.com and follow @PetrucceKetsia on Twitter.